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From the Office of the Director of Health

Local Advocates for HIV Testing Recognized

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department is proud to partner with AIDS Project of the Ozarks (APO) to recognize six individuals who have chosen to speak out in an effort to encourage Ozark residents to get tested for HIV.

Despite the stigma that has historically been attached to HIV/AIDS, these six people who are living with HIV decided their voices must be heard. Their television public service announcement currently playing across southwest Missouri encourages people to recognize that HIV/AIDS does not discriminate and to get tested. The health department will honor them at a special ceremony on June 14th at 11:30 am at APO, located at 1901 E. Bennett in Springfield.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 1 million Americans are currently living with HIV. Of those, an estimated 24% do not even know they are infected. HIV/AIDS is a public health crisis.

Advances in medication have allowed people with HIV/AIDS to live longer, but before they can start treatment, they must know they are infected. Testing is the only way to learn their status.

On June 27th, the health department joins APO in observing the 15th annual National HIV Testing Day with extended testing hours. Testing will be offered from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm at AIDS Project of the Ozarks, located at 1901 E. Bennett in Springfield. HIV testing is also available on a regular basis at the health department, located at 227 E. Chestnut Expressway in Springfield. For a list of clinic dates and times call (417) 864-1684 or visit <http://www.springfieldmo.gov/health/hiv.html>.

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